

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A unitized pinion seal for mounting between a first member and a second member rotatable relative to the first member, the unitized pinion seal comprising: a sleeve portion adapted to mount rotationally fixed to the first member; ~~and a seal portion~~ a retainer portion slidably mounted to the sleeve portion in a radial interference fit and adapted to mount to the second member; and

a seal portion mounted to said retainer portion and engaging said sleeve portion;

wherein said retainer portion is disengaged from said sleeve portion during assembly of said sleeve portion on to said first member.

2. (original) The unitized pinion seal of claim 1 wherein the first member is an axle companion flange and the second member is a carrier/bearing cage.

3. (currently amended) ~~The unitized pinion seal of claim 1~~ A unitized pinion seal for mounting between a first member and a second member rotatable relative to the first member, the unitized pinion seal comprising:

a sleeve portion adapted to mount rotationally fixed to the first member;

a seal portion slidably mounted to the sleeve portion in a radial interference fit and including a retainer portion adapted to mount to the second member;
and

wherein the sleeve portion is adapted to install to the first member with a radial interference fit such that the radial interference fit of the seal portion to the sleeve portion creates a greater axial retention load than an axial installation load created by the interference fit of the sleeve portion relative to the first member.

4. (original) The unitized pinion seal of claim 1 wherein said seal portion includes a retainer mechanism engaging said sleeve member prior to assembly of said unitized pinion seal to said first member.

5. (original) The unitized pinion seal of claim 4, wherein said retainer mechanism includes a first retainer ring engaging a seal body and a second retainer ring engaging said sleeve portion prior to assembly of said unitized pinion seal to said first member.

6. (original) A method of installing a pinion seal to a carrier/bearing cage and an axle companion flange, the method comprising the steps of:

assembling a sleeve portion of the pinion seal to a seal portion of the pinion seal with a radial interference fit;

assembling the pinion seal to the carrier/bearing cage;

partially installing the axle companion flange into the sleeve portion while generating less axial installation force between the axle companion flange and the sleeve portion than an axial retention load created by the interference fit between the seal portion and the sleeve portion; and

further installing the axle companion flange into the sleeve portion while preventing further axial movement of the sleeve portion relative to the companion flange, to thereby overcome the axial retention load and move the sleeve portion axially relative to the seal portion.

7. (new) A unitized pinion seal for mounting between a first member and a second member rotatable relative to the first member, the unitized pinion seal comprising:

a sleeve portion adapted to mount rotationally fixed to the first member, said sleeve including an outer surface having a ramp portion disposed between an axially extending forward portion and an axially extending rear portion, wherein said axially extending forward portion has a smaller diameter than said axially extending rear portion; and

a seal portion mounted to the sleeve portion in a radial interference fit and including a retainer portion adapted to mount to the second member, said seal portion including a first seal lip engaging said axially extending forward portion and a second seal lip engaging said axially extending rear portion.